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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEDGWICK COUNTY FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORIES TO RECEIVE DNA GRANT

WICHITA, Kan. – A U.S. Department of Justice program to support DNA crime analysis labs will provide an \$84,742 grant to the Sedgwick County Forensic Science Laboratories for fiscal year 2004, United States Attorney Eric Melgren said Wednesday.

The new grant from the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs will help the Forensic Science Laboratories to make improvements to infrastructure and analysis capacity.

The Forensic Science Laboratories are part of the Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center at 1109 N. Minneapolis, which also houses the office of the District Coroner. In January 1997 the center opened the first DNA laboratory of its kind in the state of Kansas. The laboratories provide a variety of services to local and regional law enforcement agencies including detection and identification of body fluids, DNA profiling technology and access to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database. Kansas has almost 9,000 convicted offender profiles in CODIS and 933 forensic samples. The CODIS database has assisted in 61 investigations by law enforcement agencies in Kansas.

DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid. It is the fundamental building block for an individual's entire genetic makeup. It is found in nearly every cell in the body. DNA from blood is the same as the DNA in skin cells, semen and saliva. It is a powerful tool for criminal forensics investigators because everyone's DNA is different from every other person's, except for identical twins.

Melgren said grants from the U.S. Department of Justice are helping crime laboratories in Kansas streamline, automate and reduce time, labor and costs to more effectively aid in investigations and prosecutions.